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Chairman Jeffrey Welborn and House Fish and Game Committee Members:

Since I am unable to attend your hearing on HB 33, I am writing to support the bill with some possible changes. For those who do not know me, I am a MT native, started work for MT FG in 1963 and have been a wildlife management and grizzly bear research biologist, cattle rancher, 20 year general outfitter and a gift products manufacturer. I am now retired but write and speak on wildlife issues.

I have concerns about item c line 16 in HB 33. If a grizzly or black bear breaks into a home, cabin, camp trailer, outbuilding or a vehicle and gets a food reward it probably should be killed and not relocated. The term transplant has a different meaning than relocation. Bears have an excellent memory and once conditioned to food seldom forget the source. Check out the Geifer Creek grizzly 1975-1977 on the Middle and North Forks of the Flathead River where he broke into at least 55 homes and cabins. FG could not kill him even though he had a radio collar part of the time. He was killed by a hunter in B.C. Most wolves and lions and many bears should not be relocated.

In 2010 I requested 15 years of conflict information on grizzly bears because I wanted to see how various FWP regions were handling the problems. I knew there were 263 conflicts in northern MT in 1998. FWP only gave me 10 years data, excluding 1998, and they changed the actual ID number on each bear so I would not be able to track the bears long- term. The categories used for bear conflicts on their website do not tell a knowledgeable bear person the details needed to understand each conflict. See WY grizzly bear conflict website and compare to MT. The MT bears were classified as livestock conflict, human conflict, preventative measure and incidental/non-target capture. For example a grizzly killing 20 calves or 50 sheep is a lot more serious than one killing a chicken or a turkey. We need to know the exact human conflict and also what they were trying to prevent. In 2012 they added the category orphaned on the site. Lauri Hanuska-Brown-- FWP told me they could not provide full and accurate details on each conflict because people might get mistaken impressions about grizzly bears. I think truthfulness on details would be an excellent policy.

Bear specialists, wolf specialists and I believe one lion specialist at Kalispell and game wardens handle problem animals. Standardized detailed records should be kept and an annual report written by FWP on each species by FWP region and made available to the public and the legislature. That history is important to improve state and regional programs and cut costs. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Allen Schallenger